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The second Paper read was—

2. *Extracts of a Despatch from His Excellency SIR GEORGE BOWEN to the DUKE OF NEWCASTLE, in reference to the voyage of Captain Norman, and the routes of Mr. Landsborough and Mr. Walker, dated Queensland, March 15th, 1862.*

“ I HAVE the happiness to report that Her Majesty’s Colonial steamer *Victoria*, Captain Norman, anchored yesterday in Moreton Bay, on its return from the exploring expedition to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

“ It will be within your Grace’s recollection, that the *Victoria* was to remain for six months in the Gulf of Carpentaria, as the *point d’appui* of the land expeditions commanded respectively by Mr. Landsborough and by Mr. Frederick Walker; the former of which was to accompany Captain Norman by sea in the tender *Firefly*, while the latter was to proceed overland from Rockhampton to the head of the Gulf. Accordingly the *Victoria* left Moreton Bay on the 20th August, 1861, with the tender *Firefly* in company; the latter vessel having on board Mr. Landsborough and his party, with thirty horses, stores, &c. The two ships arrived off the entrance to the Great Barrier reef on the 1st September, but were separated in a heavy gale from the south-east. On the 7th September the *Victoria* found the *Firefly* a complete wreck on one of Sir Charles Hardy’s Islands, the crew and passengers, and 27 of the horses, having, however, reached the shore in safety. The *Firefly* was abandoned as past all repair, by her own master, when Captain Norman took the hull in hand, and the crew of the *Victoria* succeeded after great labour in getting it afloat, patching it up, and reshipping the surviving horses. The hull was then taken in tow. In crossing the Gulf of Carpentaria, the hull of the *Firefly* laboured so much that it was feared the horses must be abandoned, and with them the main hope of the expedition. Fortunately, however, the gale, after blowing for 36 hours, went down, when the crew of the hull was reinforced from the steamer, the pumps were cleared, and the leaks kept under, until the *Victoria* reached the Investigator Roads on the 29th September. The trees marked and the wells dug by Flinders nearly sixty years ago, were discovered on Sweer’s Island, close to this anchorage. The necessary preparations having been made for disembarking Mr. Landsborough and his party, the horses were towed by the boats of the *Victoria* about 20 miles up the River Albert, where 25 were safely got on shore on the 17th October. The hull was then moored in the stream as a dépôt. Much labour and care were required to get the disabled and leaky hull up the river, as it appears that in this part of the Gulf of Carpentaria there

is only one tide during the 24 hours, and that high water is always at night.

"On the 16th November, Mr. Landsborough started on his first exploration. He proceeded about 200 miles in a south-westerly direction, towards the centre of the Australian continent, and returned to the depôt on the 19th January. His Journal reports the discovery of much valuable country. After recruiting his horses and party at the depôt, Mr. Landsborough again started with provisions for 4 months, on the 10th February, intending to make his way overland to the settled districts of Queensland.

"In the mean time Mr. Walker had arrived at the depôt on the River Albert on the 7th December, having made his way overland from Rockhampton in 104 days. He proceeded at first in a westerly direction as far as the Barcoo (Mitchell's Victoria) River, when he struck north-west to the Gulf, keeping, it seems, about 100 miles west of Mr. Gregory's track, on the North Australian expedition of 1858. Mr. Walker was attacked by the natives on several occasions; and it is mentioned that he found "Terry's breech-loading carbines," with which his party had been provided, to be peculiarly serviceable. He also reports the exploration of much valuable territory lying within the western boundary of Queensland, *i.e.*, the 141st meridian of longitude. But the great success achieved by Mr. Walker was in his discovery, on the bank of the River Flinders, of the tracks of Messrs. Burke and Wills, the leaders of the overland expedition from Victoria.

"Captain Norman replenished Mr. Walker's stores with supplies for four months. Mr. Walker started on the 20th December from the River Albert, determined, if possible, to follow up throughout their whole course the returning tracks of Burke and Wills.

"Captain Norman informs me that the mouths of the Rivers Albert and Flinders, like those of most other rivers in Australia, are obstructed by bars, on which there are only 4 or 5 feet of water at low tide, with from 8 to 12 feet rise and fall. Both these rivers, however, are noble streams, navigable for above 30 miles for vessels of considerable burden. In all human probability English settlements will arise on their banks at no distant period, and will form the outlets of the rich pastoral and agricultural country of the neighbouring interior. The climate of this district, though very warm, appears to be very healthy.

"Captain Norman advises me again to press on Her Majesty's Government the urgent necessity which exists in the interests of humanity, and of the general commerce of the empire at large, for the formation of a settlement at Cape York, and for the completion

of the survey of the north-eastern coast of Australia by means of a small steamer. But I have addressed your Grace at length respecting these two undertakings in several previous despatches, stating at the same time how liberally the Government of Queensland is ready to contribute towards the expenses of both."

3. *Extracts of a Despatch from His Excellency SIR GEORGE BOWEN to the DUKE OF NEWCASTLE, in reference to Mr. Landsborough's first Route to the South-West of Carpentaria, dated Queensland, April 12th, 1862.*

"I HAVE the honour to forward herewith two copies of the Journal kept by Mr. Landsborough (the Queensland explorer) on his recent expedition, also a copy of the chart of his route. It will be seen that Mr. Landsborough, starting in a south-westerly direction from the left bank of the Albert River, towards the centre of the Australian continent, penetrated as far as $20^{\circ} 14' 5''$ s. lat., and $138^{\circ} 17'$ E. long., thus reaching a point 250 miles south-east of the point reached by McDouall Stuart on 27th August, 1860, and about 320 miles north of the farthest point reached by Captain Sturt on the 8th September, 1845. Finding no trace of Messrs. Burke and Wills (to search for whom was the primary object of the expedition), Mr. Landsborough returned by a somewhat different track to the depôt on the Albert River. It has been truly observed, in an Australian publication, that the 'cheerful alacrity with which he resumed his arduous labours, the moment his party had been strengthened and provisioned, proves that his heart was in his work.'

"The country traversed by Mr. Landsborough on his recent journey consisted at first of thinly-wooded and well grassed plains, which were suffering from drought at that period of the year (height of summer), but which bore marks of being occasionally inundated. Farther on towards the interior the travellers, after crossing some basaltic ridges overrun with desert-grass, came upon fine open plateaux, lightly timbered and covered with rich pasture, to which the name of "Barkly Table-land" has been given, in honour of the Governor of Victoria. Much of the upland as well as of the lowland country is reported as well suited for cotton cultivation, while vast tracts are admirably adapted for pastoral purposes. It has been suggested that, inasmuch as the rainfall on the north-eastern coast of Australia occurs at a season when the territory skirting the southern portion of the Gulf of Carpentaria generally appears to suffer from drought, it is probable that a